

Mr. Alex Holtzman

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H. Wakenham

Cigaretts and Flammable Mattresses

The tough new federal flammability test for mattresses as described in the December 11 issue of The Wall Street Journal, and which is the subject of a letter from Chairman W. R. Poage of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture, deserves the following comments:

1. Cigaretts vary in combustion temperature due to tobacco composition, paper characteristics, and other variables and therefore, in a test for mattress flammability involving lighted cigarettes, it is necessary to very carefully specify the cigarettes to be used. Such specification does not appear in the test described in The Wall Street Journal, although it may be in the actual federal test specification.
2. The Bureau of Furniture and Bedding Inspection under a Mr. Howard C. Winslow, Department of Consumer Affairs in the State of California Agriculture and Services Agency, has also issued a specification for the determination of mattress flammability. Their test uses an electric "hot rod" heater in place of the cigarette, and in their hands provides a satisfactory and reproducible source of heat for the test. Last year I discussed this test in considerable detail with Mr. Winslow, and he feels very strongly that the use of cigarettes as an ignition source is too variable for a practical test.
3. I feel that the complaint of the bedding manufacturers with respect to the test design and cost is fully justified. It should be possible to devise a relatively simple test to measure the flammability of mattress materials by the use of a simulated mattress structure more compatible to laboratory conditions than a whole, complete, finished mattress. The Commerce Department test seems to completely ignore the practicalities of the situation.

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Mr. Holtzman

- 2 -

January 4, 1973

4. With respect to Chairman Poage's suggestion for self-extinguishing cigarettes, this characteristic can be completely controlled by properly engineering the cigarette. Obviously a rapidly self-extinguishing cigarette would not be a desirable product from the marketing and consumer viewpoint. It would therefore be necessary to recognize some compromise condition whereby cigarettes would be self-extinguishing after a specified period of time.

J. Walsh

att. Proposed mattress flammability standard for the State of California
Bedding Magazine/April 1972

c: Mr. C. H. Goldsmith (with att.)

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